



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

PROJECT TITLE	Pack Trail Shaded Fuel Break		
PROJECT LOCATION	T2N, R16E, Portion of Sections 1, and 12 MDBM	COUNTY	Tuolumne
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Roger Petersen		
ADDRESS	18464 Striker Court Sonora, CA 95370	PHONE	(209) 532-7424 x 109

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project area is located in northwestern Tuolumne County along Pack Trail Road and around the northeast ¼ of the northwest ¼ of Section 12. This 40 acres has been subdivided into 1 to 10 acre parcels. The project is approximately 7 miles northeast of the city of Sonora and 1 mile south of the Cedar Ridge Development. Project area is defined as 150 feet either side of the designated centerline of either the road or 40 boundary lines. The northern terminus is the intersection of Pack Trail Road and Buckboard Court. The southern terminus is the southern boundary of the NE ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 12. The project area ranges from approximately 3,800 feet to 4,280 feet in elevation above sea level. The project is just south of the main ridge dividing the Stanislaus River Canyon to the north and the more populated areas of Tuolumne County to the South. The potential for a fire coming south out of the Stanislaus River Canyon is high. Pack Trail is the only road for ingress and egress for residents. If a fire did rapidly move south out of the canyon residents could be trapped with no avenue for escape. Vegetation type is in the conifer transitional belt and consists of Ponderosa Pine and Chaparral vegetation types. Major tree species include native oaks and conifers, Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), Canyon and Interior Live Oak (*Quercus chrysolepis* and *wislizenii*), Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Sugar Pine (*Pinus lambertiana*), and Incense Cedar (*Libocedrus decurrens*). Brush species include manzanita, toyon, ceanothus, poison oak, and bear clover. The area is overstocked with vegetation and crown closure is 100% except for areas where clearing has occurred for residential building. The conifer component is experiencing a large amount of mortality from bark beetles as years of drought have weakened the trees. This has resulted in a large number of dead standing trees posing threats to safety along the roads and potentially increasing the potential for wildfire spread. Understory brush is thick through most of the project. The Oak Fire in June of 2015 burned 100 acres approximately 2 miles west of this project. The project consists of fuel break construction. Construction will consist of pre-commercial and commercial thinning over story trees to reduce crown densities to a level that will not carry a crown fire. Trees will be selected to create an open canopy with a goal of 40% crown cover, and improve forest health and vigor. Trees with cavities will be left to maintain wildlife structure. Understory treatments will consist of removal of ground and ladder fuels. Vegetation will be left in open areas so that distance between shrubs or trees is at least twice the height of the plants. Understory trees to be left will be pruned to 10 feet or ½ the live crown whichever is less. The project area is approximately 80 acres in size. Vegetation removal will consist of hand cutting and piling for burning during a safe burn window, mechanical mastication with light and/or heavy equipment, and/or harvesting using mechanical harvesters or traditional logging techniques. Heavy equipment will be confined to slopes that do not exceed 40%. Trees up to 12 inches DBH may be removed to achieve the necessary spacing needed for achieving a functional fuel break. Larger merchantable trees shall be removed using the Forest Practice Act 1038 Exemption process. Any tree posing a threat to life and safety shall be removed. Grass, forbs and other low-lying ground vegetation will not be targeted for removal. The primary goal is to disrupt the horizontal and vertical continuity of fuels in order to provide a safe and feasible means of defense against the high probability of vegetation fire within the wildland urban interface.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- ☒ Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 15304- Minor Alterations to Land
- ☐ Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- ☐ Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project fits under portions of 15304- Minor Alterations to Land.

The Class of Exemption to be used is 14 CCR 15304- Minor Alterations to Land. The project consists of constructing fuel breaks. A query of the CNDDDB did not reveal the presence of any sensitive species. Protection measures for watercourses are consistent with The California Forest Practice Rules. Protection measures for archaeological sites are consistent with Best Management Practices implemented in the area and project impacts are not expected. All burning will be done in accordance with a permit for the Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

 12/2/16

Helge Eng, Deputy Director Date
California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

DEC 05 2016

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE